

**PASTORAL LETTER
BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF MALTA
AND THE BISHOP OF GOZO**

GENERAL ELECTIONS 2008

Towards a more united people

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

In a few days time we shall be called to vote to elect our government. When we say so we are happy, because this is a sign that we are living in a democratic country.

True democracy, although it is not perfect as a system, has many advantages, among them the fact that people can show what they want through a free vote and also the application of the system known as the 'separation of powers' which permits the solution of differences between us through the Legislative (Parliament), Executive (Government) and Judiciary (Courts of Law) system. All these authorities have to be independent of each other, and balance one another. Ideally, and functioning as it should, we consider this system to be the best of the systems that have been developed until now. This system permits people, through their vote, to choose the ideas and the party that they consider best to lead them for a number of years, in our case for five years.

However, as is the case in so many other things, this system can have its shortcomings too. To be just, the democratic system depends very much on a number of factors. We shall mention some of them.

The electoral moment has to give the chance to one and all to freely express their opinions with respect for the truth; the chance that voters hear everybody's opinions to be able to make their choice; and an electoral campaign that does not degenerate into attacks, even if only verbal, against persons or into a kind of behaviour that creates obstacles for such freedom.

A good choice in the elections, of values as well as of principles and projects. It is for this reason that the political parties present to the electorate their Electoral Programme. We want to encourage the Maltese people so that in their choice they might be able to coordinate the traditional values of our society, many of which have their origins in our christian heritage, with the exigencies of modern society. These values are not something which is simply very generic, but must be clearly proclaimed in the political context. This needs to be done without losing our basic values such as the dignity of every person, whatever its nationality, from conception till death; the practical protection of the values of marriage and the family. The citizen has the duty to vote with these values in mind.

The choice of the persons who in our opinion will faithfully and honestly put into effect the mandate given to them by the people. This applies to all candidates. If they see to it that what is so important during the elections, namely that differences come to the fore, does not hinder that after the elections the people is united as one People with a common interest, they would be seeking the common good of the country. Those who are elected, whether in Government or in Opposition, even though with different responsibilities, always work towards the common good of our country.

After the elections: Besides, we would like to suggest that, as from now, the political parties start taking decisions, which are made known to the people, on the kind of attitude they want to follow after the elections, whatever the service the party will be giving to the country, in Government or in Opposition.

We would like to see, as from now, the political parties promising to collaborate together as servants of one nation, especially in social matters, such as the drug problem; young people and their future; usury; the protection of stability in marriage and the family; the environment and the historical heritage.

Committed christians: We would also like to entrust a mission to those candidates and members of political parties who consider themselves committed christians: that in their commitment in a party, they remember that they are christians and therefore should strive to influence their own parties, from the inside, on that which through their own activity can be performed better and that which could be improved in their own party. It should be especially these persons who purify their own party from any attitude that goes against the values of the Gospel, such as words that hurt, disrespect for any person whether or not involved in politics, and similar attitudes.

It is our wish that, also after the elections we see our people united in the search for the welfare of the country. To this end, these days we would like to see the political reality, motivated by love towards our country which always comes first, overcoming political partisanship.

We impart to you our heartfelt Blessing.

Today, 19 February 2008.

✘ **Paul Cremona O.P.**
Archbishop of Malta

✘ **Mario Grech**
Bishop of Gozo

(To be delivered during Masses on Saturday Evening and Sunday, 23 and 24 February 2008.)